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Financing of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the financing of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) (A/52/895) for the period from 27 March to 30 June 1998 and from 1 July to 30 November 1998. During its consideration of the item, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. By its resolution 1159 (1998) of 27 March 1998, the Security Council established MINURCA with effect from 15 April 1998 for an initial period of three months until 15 July 1998. The Council expressed its intention to decide on the extension of MINURCA on the basis of the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General by 20 June 1998.

3. By the same resolution, the Security Council also authorized the Secretary-General to take the measures necessary to ensure that MINURCA would be fully deployed by 15 April 1998 in order to carry out its mandate, and to ensure a smooth transition between the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) and MINURCA.

4. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 2 of the report of the Secretary-General that the formal establishment of MINURCA was accompanied by a transfer of authority on 15 April 1998 of MISAB forces to United Nations command. The Committee also notes that pursuant to paragraph 11 of Security Council resolution 1159 (1998), the transfer of authority was preceded by a transitional period from 27 March to 14 April 1998, during which the United Nations advance headquarters, comprising military and civilian personnel and essential equipment, was deployed to Bangui.

5. Upon enquiry as to the factors that contributed to the quick deployment of MINURCA, the Advisory Committee was informed that they included the logistical support provided by the Government of France, the inheritance by MINURCA of most of the contingents, mission access to premises that had been used by MISAB and the fact that military planners worked closely with MISAB and the French Government to launch the operation. In that connection, the Committee commends the Secretariat for the quick deployment of MINURCA.

6. The Advisory Committee recalls that in paragraph 2 of the annex to his report to the Security Council dated 23 February 1998 (S/1998/148), the Secretary-General indicated that the mandate of MINURCA would be of a limited duration and, subject to the decision of the Council, would end 90 days after the announcement of the election results, with the actual drawdown of the Mission beginning no later than 60 days from the date of such an announcement.

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7. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 3 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/895) that pending the submission of a report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the mandate of MINURCA and his recommendations on the future role of the United Nations in the legislative elections process, the proposed budget for MINURCA for the financial period from 1 July to 30 June 1999 covers only the period from 1 July to 30 November 1998. The Committee also notes that the proposed budget for the withdrawal of military contingents and the liquidation of MINURCA would be submitted to the General Assembly at a later time when a decision on the Mission's future will have been taken by the Security Council. The Committee notes from paragraph 3 of the report that it is expected that elections will be held in August/September 1998. It is also expected that a related report will be submitted to the Security Council. Upon enquiry as to how costs relating to the electoral process would be met, the Committee was informed that cost estimates for the electoral process would be submitted to the Assembly as a revised budget.

8. Information on voluntary contributions and trust funds is contained in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the report of the Secretary-General.

9. With regard to the status of reimbursement to troop-contributing Governments, the Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 11 of the report of the Secretary-General that reimbursement of standard troop costs will be authorized upon approval by the General Assembly of the Mission's budget and receipt of assessed contributions.

10. Information on the status-of-forces agreement is contained in paragraph 12 of the report of the Secretary-General. In that connection, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Government of the Central African Republic had signed the status-of-forces agreement on 8 May 1998.

Cost estimates for the period from 27 March to 30 June 1998 and from 1 July to 30 November 1998

11. By its letter of 13 April 1998, the Advisory Committee concurred in the Secretary-General's authority to enter into commitments in an amount of $12,844,900 gross ($12,469,900 net) to meet the most immediate requirements of MINURCA for the period from 27 March to 30 June 1998.

12. The requirements for the establishment and operation of MINURCA for the period from 27 March to 30 June 1998, inclusive of the transition period from 27 March to 14 April 1998, are estimated by the Secretary-General, on a full-cost basis, at $20,776,000 gross ($20,438,400 net), inclusive of budgeted voluntary contributions in kind estimated at $967,400. From the total amount, non-recurrent start-up costs amount to $7,493,500, inclusive of budgeted voluntary contributions in kind of $407,200 provided by the Government of France, while recurrent costs are estimated at $13,282,500 gross ($12,944,900 net), inclusive of a budgeted voluntary contribution of $560,200 provided by the Government of France. A breakdown of the cost estimate by object of expenditure is contained in annex I to the report of the Secretary-General; annex III contains supplementary information.

13. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 13 of the report of the Secretary-General that some 60 per cent of the total amount for the period from 27 March to 30 June 1998 is based on standard costs and ratios, while the remaining 40 per cent covers mission-specific requirements.

14. The Secretary-General estimates the maintenance budget of MINURCA for the period from 1 July to 30 November 1998, on a full-cost basis, at $28,774,500 gross ($28,038,000 net), inclusive of budgeted voluntary contributions in kind estimated at $1,137,500. A breakdown of the cost estimate for the period is contained in annex II to the report of the Secretary-General; annex III contains supplementary information.

15. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 15 of the report of the Secretary-General that for the period from 1 July to 30 November 1998, some 55 per cent of the total amount is based on standard costs and ratios, while the remaining 45 per cent covers mission-specific requirements. This is lower than for the period ending 30 June 1998 because of the differences in non-recurrent items (see para. 12 above).

16. The cost estimates for the period from 27 March to 30 June 1998 and for the period from 1 July to 30 November 1998 provide for an authorized strength of 1,350 military contingent personnel, 24 civilian police experts, 106 international staff and 73 local staff.

17. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 3 of annex III.C to the report of the Secretary-General that provision for military contingents is based on the deployment of 1,230 contingent personnel as at 15 April 1998 and on the assumption that the authorized strength of 1,350 personnel of all ranks would be attained by 15 May 1998. The Committee also notes from annex III.A that estimates for rations for contingents not receiving food and bottled water allowance take into account delayed deployment of one contingent. In that connection, the

Committee was informed that as at 1 May there were 1,218 military personnel at the Mission. The Committee was also informed that the projected savings from the delay of the deployment of the remaining contingent from 15 to 22 May amounted to $47,400 under military personnel costs and $7,300 under self-sustainment of contingent-owned equipment. Accordingly, the Committee recommends the reduction of the estimate by $54,700.

18. With regard to rations, the Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 4 of annex III.C that at the request of troop-contributing countries, arrangements established under MISAB for the feeding of military contingents will be continued; provision is made for the disbursement of food and bottled water allowance to 1,000 troops at $11.04 per person per day for 77,000 person-days for the period up to 30 June 1998 ($850,100) and for 153,000 person-days for the period from 1 July to 30 November 1998 ($1,689,100). The Committee enquired as to how the rate of $11.04 was arrived at; the information received did not clarify the matter. Upon enquiry as to how this arrangement would be implemented, the Committee was informed that cash was given to the paymaster of each troop-providing country, who in turn distributes it to the contingents.

19. The Advisory Committee was informed that savings would result from that arrangement; the cost-effectiveness of it should be monitored and indicated in the next performance report. In view of the fact that some contingents would be receiving a cash allowance for food and bottled water while other contingents would be receiving rations, the Committee requests the Secretariat to take measures necessary to avoid any potential problems related to double expenditure.

20. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee recommends that effective measures be put in place to monitor prompt payment to intended recipients and to ensure the existence of appropriate audit trails for such measures. Those measures should not lead the Organization to incur unnecessary administrative and management expenditures.

21. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 5 of annex III.C to the report of the Secretary-General that provision under contingent-owned equipment reflects the implementation in MINURCA of new contingent-owned equipment reimbursement procedures endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/222 of 11 April 1996. The costs associated with the major equipment are calculated on a full-cost basis using the standard wet-lease reimbursement rates and are estimated at $1,171,600 for the period from 15 April to 30 June 1998 and $1,955,500 for the period from 1 July to 30 November 1998. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that countries providing contingents had not signed a memorandum of understanding. In that connection, the Committee requests the Secretariat to take into account the effect of any equipment that may be provided to the Mission free of charge.

22. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 10 of annex III.C to the report of the Secretary-General that the provision for salaries of internationally recruited staff is made on the basis of the 1998 standard cost rates for New York, and that local salaries reflect the scale applicable in the mission area, which is for 1990. The Committee was informed that a new survey would be conducted shortly. The Committee also notes that for the period from 15 April to 30 June 1998, the cost estimates take into account the projected 15 and 10 per cent delayed recruitment factor for international and local staff respectively, and that for the period from 1 July to 30 November 1998 a vacancy factor of 5 per cent has been used for international and local staff. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, as at 18 May 1998, 64 international staff had been recruited, with 22 in travel status and expected to arrive in Bangui by 31 May (a total complement of 86 staff). Furthermore, 16 international staff are expected to be recruited by 30 June 1998, for a total international civilian complement of 102, representing a vacancy rate of 4 per cent. Local staff on board as at 18 May 1998 totalled 36; the remaining 37 are under recruitment. In view of a delay in the recruitment of staff, the Committee recommends that the estimate under staff costs, including staff assessment, for the period from 27 March to 30 June 1998 be reduced by one third, or $1,193,300 gross ($1,080,800 net).

23. With regard to coordination, the Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 11 of annex III.C to the report of the Secretary-General that the United Nations Resident Coordinator/United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative would concurrently serve as Director of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

24. With regard to air operations, the Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 28 of annex III.C to the report of the Secretary-General that provision is made for two medium-utility helicopters required for logistical support and medical evacuation, one heavy passenger/cargo fixed-wing aircraft for supply/resupply tasks and one light command and liaison fixed-wing aircraft also suited for medical and casualty evacuations to hospitals in neighbouring countries. In view of the request for two helicopters for medical evacuation, the Committee enquired as to the need for the light fixed-wing aircraft to perform the same functions. It was informed that the light passenger aircraft was required for command and

liaison purposes, travel for political consultations within the mission area, which covers countries neighbouring the Central African Republic, as well as to ensure medical and casualty evacuation capability to hospitals in neighbouring countries, as required.

25. Provision is made under naval operations for fuel estimated at $500 for the period from 15 April to 30 June 1998 and $1,000 for the period from 1 July to 30 November 1998 for five contingent-provided motorized patrol boats. Upon enquiry as to the need for the boats, the Advisory Committee was informed that they were required to patrol the Oubangui River.

26. With regard to the request contained in paragraph 20 (a) of the report of the Secretary-General to establish a special account for MINURCA, the Advisory Committee notes that while 15 April 1998 was the date of the establishment and mandate of the Mission, 27 March 1998 was the date of the authorization of expenditure in respect of the Mission.

27. In paragraph 20 (b) of his report, the Secretary-General requests the General Assembly to appropriate and assess $19,808,600 gross ($19,471,000 net) for the establishment and operation of MINURCA for the period from 27 March to 30 June 1998, inclusive of the amount of $12,844,900 gross ($12,469,900 net) already authorized by the Advisory Committee. Taking into account its comments in paragraphs 17 and 22 above, the Committee recommends that the Assembly approve an appropriation of $18,560,600 gross ($18,335,500 net).

28. In paragraph 20 (c) of his report, the Secretary-General requests the General Assembly to appropriate $27,637,000 gross ($26,900,500 net) in connection with the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July to 30 November 1998. The Advisory Committee recommends acceptance of the Secretary-General's request for the period from 15 July to 30 November 1998.